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THE EXHIBITION OF THE NATIONAL SCULPTURE SOCIETY.

THE National Sculpture Society made its first independent exhibition in New York, in the spring of 1895. The novel arrangement of the exhibit as an Italian garden made of it a picture as unique as beautiful, and gave to our American public a new idea regarding the use of sculptural decorations in parks and conservatories. The *mise en scène* was necessarily an expensive one, and for three years the Society, while carrying on vigorously its warfare against bad public monuments, has recuperated in finance.

This year a similar exhibition was projected, and has been brought to successful termination. In general effect, as seen upon the opening evening, April 30, this salon of American sculpture was no less beautiful than its predecessor, even surpassing it in certain views. More closely examined, it hardly equaled the former exhibit. It lacked works of importance and it lacked works of poetic feeling. The space to be filled was large and the time of preparation comparatively short. The exhibition of 1895 was retrospective and its display was culled from the lifetime of our national art.

If the St. Gaudens Shaw Memorial had formed part of the array, the tone of the entire collection would have been greatly raised. It, with French's "Erin," are worthily representative; the dull commonplace average gives no idea, after all, of our artistic possibilities. But the cast of the great relief was taken to Europe to grace the salon, and our most famous sculptor had nothing in this exhibit. One can easily understand the desire of a great artist to have his important works seen by the most critical and appreciative public in the world, but it is a matter of regret that St. Gaudens, who has done so much for American sculpture, should be so indifferent toward our exhibitions.

Daniel French was well represented, and his O'Reilly Memorial was by far the most important work of the exhibit, occupying with its beautiful and simple mass the post of honor in the Vanderbilt gallery, at the end of a vista of several halls. As our Institute has been for some time the fortunate custodian of this noble work, a description is unnecessary. May it soon return to us!

Mr. French's other contributions are his Herodotus for the Congressional Library; Rufus Choate for Boston, angular and nervous, doubtless very true to the character; and his beautiful little figure, the decoration of a tomb in Milwaukee.

Charles Niehaus' Hahnemann has not fulfilled the promise of his admirable sketch. It has grown hard and dry ; its big, simple forms are now lean and pinched, though the lines remain impressive. The reliefs accompanying it are decidedly uninteresting, but then it is hard to do good reliefs.

Warner knew how ! His door for the Congressional Library is superb throughout, and made a fit ending to a lifework of honest achievement. His art was not of the dashing and showy sort, and his works were appreciated only by a few brother artists in his lifetime, but they are destined to grow in value as the years roll on.

It will be remembered that Herbert Adams was selected, at the time of Mr. Warner's death, to complete the second door. The models of both are in this exhibition and a comparison is interesting. Adams has acquitted himself well, but I think with a less signal triumph than his predecessor. There are wonderful bits of modeling here, as in the right hand and arm of his "Truth," but the figures are heavy and the faces are lacking in charm. However, another cast of one of these identical figures, a cast tinted as only Adams knows how to do it, attracted my attention at the Academy, and seemed to me exquisite. Adams' forte is his beautiful busts of women. One of Julia Marlowe was coveted by everyone of us. It was a radiant presentation of our popular actress—an impression of her as she appears upon the stage, rather than a close rendering of her features. The artist—being an artist—has chosen the better part and made of his portrait something delightful. George Barnard pronounced it worthy of the Renaissance—as great as the greatest.

Having glanced at a few of the most striking things, we begin now to look at the general scheme of arrangement. The first hall, containing the Hahnemann opposite the entrance and the Library doors at either end, was decorated principally by its scores of busts and figures, suggesting in arrangement the usual museum of sculpture.

The next, a smaller, square room, was converted into an arbor with trellises and real vines, rustic benches, and a charming little fountain, which made sweet music as its stream rose and fell. This fountain was a tiny gem from MacMonnies' Parisian studio, a regular Verrochio baby holding aloft a struggling duck. To the left of this improvised conservatory was a room containing the smaller bronzes, and to the right another had become almost a chapel through the presence of the Duveneck tomb. This tribute of our friend Frank Duveneck to his sainted wife is as beautiful in execution as it is touching and pathetic in sentiment. It was a labor of love and it carries a strange appeal to every heart. The same room contained bronze casts of many of Warner's finest things, a memorial collection to be placed in the Metropolitan

Museum. Great qualities are theirs, which seemed to me to shame much of our work into the background.

Ascending a step or two, one enters the larger hall, named after some generous Vanderbilt. This broad space has been quite transformed through the skill and taste of the committee of arrangements. The Italian garden *motif* was again adopted, but in a new way and with delightful results. The walls were covered with evergreen, and upon seeing the sculpture outlined against it one realizes anew that there is nothing finer than Nature's own background. Then short hedges of verdure were placed here and there, leading to unexpected views and approaches. A colonnade of graceful proportions was erected on three sides of this hall, and the fourth side was filled with a cascade fountain, crowned by Ward's "Student," of the Garfield monument in Washington. Between the columns which outlined the inner court were placed six of the large figures of the Congressional Library dome, namely: Herodotus, by French; Solon, by Ruckstuhl; Bacon, by Boyle; Chancellor Kent, by Bissell; Columbus, by Bartlett, and Professor Henry, by Adams. All of these are good, scholarly works, executed by thoughtful men, masters of their craft; among them Bartlett's "Columbus" stands out clearest in my memory as original and spontaneous. It shows us the discoverer in a new light; no longer the gentle dreamer, the eloquent pleader, the enthusiast, nor yet the silent victim in chains, but a hero of might and confidence, hurling proud defiance at his calumniators. The novelty of the *motif* arrests attention, and the sculptor's big treatment of lines and surface are found to be consistent and adequate.

Chicago's representation was necessarily small. Mr. Bock's "Boulder," seen here at a recent exhibition, was appreciated by the sculptors and given a good place, though it did not arrive until the morning of the opening day. Mr. Wuertz's "Fountain of Plenty" was pictured in the catalogue, but he neglected to send the figure, and was represented only by his small bust, "Inspiration." Mrs. Lou Moore's striking portrait bust of M. Bensley was counted the work of a man, so vigorous and straightforward is its handling. Leonard Crunelle's charming children are accepted by all juries unanimously. His "Nelly," of the sweet, piquant face, and his "Little Jean"—the tiny young Napoleon head emerging from a carefully pinned shawl—won favor in New York just as they did here last winter. Will La Favor and the writer showed respectively portrait reliefs and busts, and Mr. Gelert, who has just left us, had his well-known group, the "Little Architects," delightfully carved in marble.

But, of course, the real interest of the Western exhibit was centered in Miss Potter's sketches. I was assailed with inquiries about them when

I arrived, and noticed at the reception that giants of plaster or bronze stood no chance in the contest with her tiny figures. She sent her "Young Mother," "Girl Dancing" and the "Girl Reading." Nearly all of the artist friends whom I met, both painters and sculptors, told me that they wanted one of them, were going to buy, or at least inquired the price.

Well, those fairy figures have a quality which is pitifully lacking in most of our sculpture — the element of pleasure. The look of spontaneity, the appeal which comes from a work which seems to have given delight in the very doing — these are virtues which cling and continue to give pleasure ever after. This exhibit contained scarcely a half-dozen things of purely ideal nature, and some of these were written all over, "Hard Work." Here were no dreams of grace, no sweet fancies to make a home more beautiful, no art "for the fun of it." Are we, as a nation, too serious, too conscientious for this? Are we doomed in our earnestness and longing to miss the very flower of art? Or are there skilled young artists coming on who shall do things so easily that there will be no hint of toil, poets of the plastic crafts whose happy thoughts shall bring us a joy unmixed with care?

LORADO TAFT.



A LEISURE STROLL.

THE cooing of the wood dove is again heard in the land. It is spring — spring in Southern California. The weather is perfect. A genial sun is bestowing the kiss of life on the face of Mother Nature, who despite the lack of rain is slowly discarding her nun-like garb of winter and assuming the habiliments of a debutante. The linnets are again selecting sites for the home wherein to rear their young. The quail, whose call sounds very much like "McArthur," is choosing his mate. The blackbirds have arrived and the live oaks which are inhabited by them are filled with ceaseless chatter. Hummingbirds, whose swift motion remind one of a buzz saw, flit past in quest of flowers. In contrast to the almost melancholy "coo-oh" of the wood dove is heard the irritating squawk of the bluejay.

Last season a parent bluejay brought a bluejay, junior, to the back door of our "Mountainside Studio." After throwing him food for a few days and incidentally christening him "Vielfrass" (glutton) he soon became quite tame. Each day made him bolder, and finally, if we were not visible, would call until we brought him crackers, cheese and bits of meat, which he ate out of our hands. This bill of fare, for which he